

Bringing home a piece of history

Anchor from
a 'Liberty ship'
installed outside
Camas school

By DANIELLE FROST
Post-Record Staff

When a Camas resident approached Marilyn Boerke to ask if she'd like to have a piece of history, the Liberty Middle School principal was intrigued.

"Eunice Abrahamsen contacted me to see if I was interested in procuring and displaying a 'piece' of a Liberty ship in order to teach our students the history of the local mill and the reasons why Liberty's name was chosen," she said. "I anticipated a small piece of the ship, so I was astounded and thrilled to learn the salvage company was offering to donate one of the ship's anchors."

The anchor came from a decommissioned Liberty ship known as the SS Davy Crockett, which had been turned into a flat deck barge. Last summer,

an extensive recovery and destruction process began on the ship after it went aground in the Columbia River near Cottonwood Beach. That effort lasted 211 days.

The ship was built between 1941 and 1945, when the United States increased its shipbuilding capacity during World War II. At the Camas mill, now known as Georgia-Pacific, workers built ship rudders, cranes and other wartime materials for the Liberty ships being constructed by Kaiser Aluminum in Vancouver.

When the former Camas High School relocated, the building was remodeled and named Liberty Middle School, in honor of the work done at the mill during World War II.

Given that history, Boerke thought it was very fitting to have the anchor displayed outside the school.

"I loved the opportunity to have a piece of that heritage," she said.

"To have that artifact tying Liberty students to the mill, that ship, and the local community was circuitous awesomeness."

A preliminary estimate

to build a pad for the anchor was around \$3,000, which the school did not have in its budget.

Boerke wrote a letter to Georgia-Pacific, requesting a grant from the GP Foundation, which donates funds to various community projects.

The grant was approved.

However, after school district officials learned the anchor weighed 4,500 pounds and was 8 feet high, it was decided that professional engineering services were needed, which increased the cost. The anchor was installed, but the school must pay the difference that the grant did not cover. One idea is to sell nameplates, but a price has not yet been determined.

These challenges did little to dampen Boerke's spirits when she finally saw the anchor being installed on a sunny Friday right before Memorial Day weekend.

"I actually got goose bumps and a little teary eyed," she said. "It's such a great opportunity to have this piece of heritage in our front yard."



DANIELLE FROST/POST-RECORD

Liberty Middle School Principal Marilyn Boerke was instrumental in efforts to obtain an anchor from an old World War II ship to be displayed in front of the school. The relic is a reminder of the school's name and its ties to local history.